

Rilpada the Seer

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February 4, 1939

I was still small and could only walk a little. I was trying to climb ¹⁵⁹ the ladder up into the house. I was standing on the second step when I fell and hit my head on the corn-pounding stone and got a large wound. It didn't heal but got bigger and bigger. [He had just been watching me dress scalp wounds on children.] Then father divined, and the divination revealed that the areca altar and a dead person would have to be placated. A dead person had grabbed me as I was trying to go up the ladder and that is why I fell. Father fed the dead person two chickens and fed the areca altar a chicken and a pig. Father put the rice and blood in my hand and held my hand to help me smear the altar myself. That night when I went to sleep, I defecated in my loincloth. [It is not customary for toddlers to wear loincloths. I asked about it and he changed the story, saying he was about twelve. I suspected this anecdote was a fantasy in which he assumed the role of the children he had just seen doctored. This was the sort of thing he did often in his dream accounts:] So they divined again. [When a person who has learned ⁷⁵³ toilet habits soils himself, it is considered a sign that he is ill and that ⁸²⁷ his soul has left him.] This time they discovered they hadn't yet made the Bayorka feast for my paternal grandmother. Father then gave one of her death feasts, but he died before he made her Bayorka feast. I got well.

[He asked if I wanted the story of how he lost his eye.] People were working in Likuwatang making the new trail. We were moving stones when a soldier came and hit me across the neck with a thorny branch. Mauglani, Padamani, Djelang, and I ran away, following the Limbur ravine. On the way we looked for kanari nuts. At Kelawat-Lanmakani were two sacred pools and a large stone under which it was dry. We leveled the sand under the stone, made a fire, and roasted cassava to eat with the nuts. Then we tied bamboo twigs into a torch and with them ²⁵² hunted cels. I shot a large one and we came back, cooked it, and ate it with five or six ears of corn we had. I was just going to sleep that night when I heard a loud noise of bells. My soul vanished. I saw an old man coming down. He said, "Who told you to sleep here?" I said, "Grandfather, we were working on the new trail and the soldiers hit me, so we ran away and came here to sleep on the edge of your house-site." I saw him take out his lime but I didn't see him sprinkle it on my eye. When we woke we found that water was pouring down into our sleeping place, so we moved farther up the bank and sat there until dawn. I said to the three men, "My three friends, last night I dreamed